

**Written Testimony for the April 5, 2023, DC Council Committee of the Whole -
Education Cluster
Budget Oversight Hearing
(sent to cow@dccouncil.gov)
Funding for programs in the Birth-to-Three For All DC Act**

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I have more than 30 years of experience in building a prosperous, thriving District of Columbia, through leadership roles in the business, nonprofit and government sectors.

I come to you today to urge the continued implementation of the ground-breaking reforms in the Birth-to-Three For All DC Act. My joint letter to the Mayor, with my colleague Bill Alsop of Hines, thanked her for increasing child care supports in her DC [Comeback Plan](#). I am also pleased to see that increase in her new budget. Her proposal would boost working families by raising the income level for child care support from 250% to 300% of poverty (pp. 94-96), covering 2,100 more families. This also supports her goal of adding 15,000 downtown residents in the next five years, as families will need local child care to bring them in.

I also ask that you continue to implement the salary increases for both early educators and program directors, as well as fund the proven health care programs that young children and their families need, especially Healthy Futures, HealthySteps and home visiting.

What happens to young children during their earliest years is a business issue. Scientists tell us that during the first three years of life, brains develop more than 1 million neural connections every second, which is the basis for all future learning and skills. Every minute that we aren't nurturing those connections is a lost opportunity during a unique period of development that won't be replicated.

Over the past decades, the definition of public infrastructure has evolved from physical assets and public works to the internet and virtual assets. In the 20th century it was mass transit and IT. We must now expand that to include the human infrastructure necessary to support employees reaching their potential, starting with child care and early education.

Quality early education and care is essential for working parents - including the families and front-line workers we need to attract to create a more populous, prosperous DC. What hurts business is unpredictability - not knowing until the last minute if your employee can

come in, or has to leave early, or is distracted because of child care. Intuitively everyone knows employees rely on child care but there's always been an assumption that it will work out somehow. Clearly that's not true anymore.

Teleworking isn't a solution - parents can't mind a young child and work at the same time. No one - neither employers nor employees - wants young children to be struggling on their parents' laps during Zoom calls. And employees don't want to have to use their sick or vacation leave for unexpected child care problems, because of a lack of stable care.

DC is job-rich, but many jobs, including at the Nationals, are unfilled for a variety of reasons. Quality early education and care is both a short- and long-term solution. We should have a society that makes it easier to work, at all levels.

We are excited to be part of a District that is leading the nation in its policies for young children and their families. We are also pleased to be part of a [network of business leaders](#) who understand that these supports are essential infrastructure to provide an attractive business environment for the District's employers, employees and our youngest learners. Thank you for your attention.